

KOOKABURRA

Habitat Box Designs



Lifestyle Capital of Victoria

The Kookaburra, the well-known and recognisable icon of the bush, is actually the world's largest kingfisher. While a lot of kingfishers typically build their nests by burrowing into banks and termite mounds, the kookaburra regularly nests in tree hollows and will use a habitat box.

Kookaburra habitat boxes are constructed differently to other boxes as they have a large entrance hole with only a small lip at the bottom. The reason for only a small lip is that young kookaburras are encouraged by their parents to defecate out of the nest, presumably to help keep the nest clean.



Kookaburra in a Wattle Tree (photo Credit: JJ Harrison (CC BY-SA 2.0))



Kookaburra family in habitat box (Photo Credit: nestboxtales.com)

Kookaburras are territorial so there is likely to only be one family group in an area. During the breeding seasons, family members from previous clutches will help raise the chicks.

General tips:

- Face away from prevailing winds
- Face them away from direct midday sun- north-east
- Ensure water proof with drainage and sealant
- Monitor your nest box (from a distance as to not disturb the birds)- this data is useful for council and Birdlife
- Be aware of unwanted visitors moving in!
- Please resist feeding your new neighbours as it creates a dependency on artificial food sources

Materials

Material	Quantity (per box)
Timber	2000mm length, 400mm wide or greater, 18mm marine ply
	420mm x 70mm x 35mm treated pine for box mount
Screws	40 x 40mm treated pine screws
Gap sealer	To seal box eg. Silastic
Cup head bolts	2 bolts, nuts and washers, recommend M8 ≥60mm (for attaching box to mount)
Coach / screws	2 coach screws M8 ≥90mm (for attaching box to tree). Can also use large treated pine screws of similar length (would need washers for TP screws)
Rubber Grommet	4 grommets, 2 per screw- allows for tree growth
Butt Hinge	1 butt hinge for lid of box
Gate hook and eye	1 gate hook and eye
Paint / timber seal	Acrylic paint or organic sealer to preserve box (eg Tung Oil)
Box lining	To insulate box - natural wood chips / shavings. Avoid treated wood

Equipment

Bench Saw	To cut timber lengths
Cordless Drill	For construction and installation
Jig saw or similar	For entrance hole – drill pilot hole (8mm bit) so jig saw blade can fit in
8mm drill bit	For drainage holes, for jig saw, fixing cup head bolts to box mount and coach bolts
Screwdriver / screwdriver bit	For box construction
3mm drill bit	Pilot holes for screws
22mm Spade Bit	To countersink nuts and washers into box mount
Socket wrench	Helpful to tighten cup head bolts into box mount / coach screws into pole / tree



Assembly

Prepare the Pieces:

1. Cut the timber to the dimensions provided to make the pieces. **See Diagram Insert.**
N.B Dimensions are for 18 mm ply and will need to be adjusted for other materials.
2. Using the pencil draw an arch entrance hole on the 'front piece' as shown in the diagram. It should be approximately 150mm high and 140mm wide with a 20mm offset from the bottom.
3. Use jigsaw to cut entrance hole- drill 8mm pilot hole for jig saw blade to fit into first.
4. Drill 3 (8mm drill bit) holes for drainage in bottom piece.
5. To prepare for assembly- drill pilot holes (3mm drill bit) into ply to avoid splitting. 2 holes on short edge and 3 holes on long edge are recommended.
6. To attach the box to box mount- mark and drill 2 pilot holes (8mm drill bit) on the back piece and the box mount. Countersink 2 bolt holes with 22mm spade bit into box mount pilot holes for the washers and nuts. Add another 2 pilot holes (3mm drill bit) each 40mm from end of box mount.

Construction:

7. Bolt the box mount to the side panel using cuphead bolts, nut and washer (cuphead on the inside of the box). Don't tighten it until you have determined the positioning of the box on the tree.
8. Prepare edges of box pieces with gap sealer.
9. Screw or drill box sides and ends together.
10. You can now paint or coat the box.
11. Add two handfuls of your insulation (e.g. wood chips etc.) to the box.

Installation

Note: Your box can be installed professionally by an arborist or wildlife expert. *If you are using a ladder to install, follow manufacturer's safety instructions.*

Kookaburras like a habitat box that is at least 5m in a semi-open position.

It is recommended that a professional installs due to the required height.

12. Select a suitable site for your habitat box. With the box mount against the tree, drill and mark the position of the holes on the tree.
13. Return box to the ground and drill 2 holes (8mm drill bit) for coach screws into tree.
14. Attach box to tree with coach screws using the socket wrench (put grommets on screws before screwing into place). If using timber screws, place a washer between the screw head and the two grommets to ensure screw doesn't go through the grommets while drilling into the tree.
15. Congratulations- your nest box is ready for use!



Kookaburra poking out of a habitat box (photo credit faunature.com.au)

Diagram

